

Showbusiness: The Problem of Finding Sponsorship within the Ghanaian Theatre

Industry

THESIS

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Administration

by

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this Thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it
has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature:.....

Candidate's Name:.....

Date:.....

*I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this Thesis were supervised in
accordance with the guidelines on supervision of applied projects laid down by Ashesi
University College.*

Supervisor's Signature:.....

Supervisor's Name:.....

Date:.....

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Abstract

They say there is “no business like show business”, but is that true for Ghana? To be exact, can corporate sponsorship help the Ghanaian theatre industry continue to grow? The purpose of this dissertation is to answer that question through interviewing key organisations in the industry as well as companies that have, had or still have sponsored theatre organisations. This paper also aims to understand what companies look for in theatre organisations when looking to sponsor them as well as vice versa. Do theatre organisations meet their sponsorship objectives, and if so, will companies be willing to sponsor them? In order to understand Ghanaian theatre industry today, this paper looks back at the history of theatre in Ghana, with an insight into the concert party. This paper also looks at sponsorship and the various forms it takes once given out. Finally, this dissertation takes a look at South Africa's theatre industry in order to gain any lessons from them. The information will be ascertained through the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews.

Keywords: sponsorship, funding, theatre, companies, business relationships

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Ghana's art scene appears to be booming, with an increasing number of movies being produced and musicians as diverse as the FOKN Bois, Wiyaala and Sarkodie gaining recognition both locally and internationally (Page, 2015). However, the Ghanaian theatre industry is not seeing that sort of growth (Aglanu, 2014). One cause of this lack of growth could be a lack of funds needed for the running of day-to-day operations like renting of performance space and advertising (Adu-Gyamfi, 2013). The purpose of this paper is to delve into why the theatre industry does not appear to have grown in Ghana and to consider whether or not the challenges of finding sponsorship has anything to do with that problem.

1.1 Defining Theatre

There are multiple definitions for “theatre”. In the sense of the dramatic arts (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2007), theatre is defined as:

“An art concerned exclusively with live performances of actions planned to create a coherent and significant sense of drama..., it is not a literary art but relies on varying degrees of acting, singing, dancing, and spectacle, as well as on the technical aspects of production” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2007).

There are various genres of theatre that tend to fall into three forms; dramatic theatre, dance theatre and music theatre (Balme, 2008). Different genres of dramatic theatre, which generally uses spoken word throughout the piece, include stand-up comedy and

improvisational theatre while dance theatre, such as ballet, employs dance in a theoretical context (Balme, 2008). Music theatre is an art form that uses different forms of music such as pop and “non-linear theatre” to break down social boundaries (Salzman, 2002). Its relative, musical theatre, on the other hand is “a business” in the sense that it generally has to deal with issues of funding more so than music theatre (Salzman, 2002). This thesis will delve into the popularity of namely dramatic theatre and whether or not this or any of the other forms have a future in Ghana blooming theatre industry.

1.2 Defining Sponsorship

According to the article “The Decision Process Involved in Corporate Sponsorship for the Arts”, one-way sponsorship can be defined as:

“...an agreement in terms of which a sponsor provides some aid to a beneficiary, which may be an association, a team or an individual, to enable the latter to pursue some activity and thereby derives [sic] the benefits contemplated in terms of its promotion strategy (Abratt et al (1987))” (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992).

Where corporate sponsorship of the arts is concerned, the terms of sponsorship between two parties (i.e. sponsor and theatre organisation) also involve what type of support is given to the party in need of support, the type of event that will be sponsored and what objectives that potential event meet. Sponsorship is “an important component of the promotion mix” as companies use it as a platform to advertise their products and launch sales promotions that help further their strategy (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). For theatre

organisations, it is a great way to earn either cash or kind needed to put on their productions.

1.3 The Problem

Finding patronage for the arts is rarely easy. Even in industrialised countries, support for the arts has only recently grown. In the United States, companies started moving away from “traditional sports packages” and provided 30% of their sponsorship towards supporting the arts in 1992 (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). This is a major improvement from 1989 where sports sponsorship was the dominant type of sponsorship among companies, accounting for 80% of total sponsorship (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). The same movement is being seen in Britain with corporate arts sponsorship between the periods of 2005/2006 and 2006/2007, increasing by 10.1% to over GBP 172 million (Thomas, Pervan, & Nuttall, 2009).

Companies in Ghana also play a visible role in sponsoring the arts. However, companies appear to sponsor more music concerts than they do theatre productions. This is evident in the competitiveness of companies, such as MTN and Vodafone, to sponsor notable events like the Ghana Music Awards (Peace FM, 2011). Also, theatre organisations, such as Abibigromma Theatre Company, tend to complain about the difficulty in finding corporate sponsorship for their productions (2016). Compounded by the recent failure of the ‘Key Soup’ Concert Party at the National Theatre (Collins J. , 2016) means that corporations may believe that sponsoring theatre will not earn them great returns. This anecdotal evidence suggests that the theatre industry is not as big as the music and film

industries in Ghana and that the players in the theatre industry do not have the same access to corporate sponsorship as their counterparts in the film and music industries. This piece seeks to why this phenomenon occurs. Is theatre simply not popular enough to the Ghanaian public? Is the problem one of a lack of innovation or a lack of funding? Given the range of theatre companies and their diverse content, sizes, and audiences, it seems unlikely that it is a problem of innovation. This paper seeks to distinguish the different ways in which Ghanaian theatre companies raise the funding to stage their productions and the process by which they connect with corporate companies to receive sponsorship.

1.4 Research Objectives

In this paper, I seek to understand how the Ghanaian theatre industry raises corporate funding. This will be through examining different theatre organisations in Ghana such as the Bambu Centre and Abibigromma Theatre Company, as well as notable people in the industry like John Collins and Uncle Ebo Whyte of Roverman Productions.

1.5 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

To further understand the role companies play in sponsoring theatre programmes, one must look at the prior theories that may provoke a company to make that marketing decision. The main idea behind the article, "The Decision Process Involved in Corporate Sponsorship for the Arts", is that one of the most important objectives when companies in Canada are deciding which arts organisation/event to sponsor is whether or not the organisation/event in question fits with the company's promotional and marketing

activities or objectives (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). This paper will examine whether or not that theory holds true for Ghana. Taking it further, the paper will discuss what else corporate sponsors in Ghana look for when deciding to sponsor an arts organisation or not.

1.6 Research Questions

Research questions this paper seeks to answer are as follows:

- On what basis do potential sponsors decide to sponsor events/organisations?
- Do theatre organisations in Ghana create events that are in line with potential sponsors' interests/objectives?
- Would companies in Ghana be interested in sponsoring theatre events (or other forms of performing arts by arts organisations that are in line with their interests?)
- Have theatre organisations been successful in following their business sponsors' objectives?

1.7 Hypothesis

As I conduct my research, I expect to find that there are a growing number of companies willing to sponsor arts organisations, but not specifically theatre organisations. There is a growing appreciation for the arts, but it is more geared towards the music and movie industries. For a company to support a theatre production in Ghana would be a big risk, as theatre is not as popular as the other performing arts forms. I believe that sponsors will be looking to support theatre organisations that produce plays that are relevant to the Ghanaian public. Certain types of theatre forms, like musical theatre, have not gained

popularity here and companies would want to support organisations that reach as many people as possible. That being said, I predict that theatre organisations will have to get creative in finding sponsorship - even resorting to outside help if needed. Consequently, I expect to find the industry is still experiencing growth thanks to certain players who understand the importance of this industry and how to use companies to their advantage in order to further the industry.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Theatre

In defining the word 'theatre', one can take a look at its interchangeable synonym 'drama'. "Etymologically, the word 'drama' comes from a Greek noun, which originally means an action and then a play for the stage" (Balme, 2008). Theatre is also defined to be "a highly collaborative endeavour and that it takes the form of drama, comedy or musical theatre" (Akashoro, Kayode, & Hussein, 2010). As Shakespeare once put it "theatre is a mirror for highlighting man's humanity" and can be used to connect people from different walks of life (Akashoro, Kayode, & Hussein, 2010). For the sake of this paper, we will use the following definition: "An art concerned exclusively with live performances of actions planned to create a coherent and significant sense of drama, ..., it is not a literary art but relies on varying degrees of acting, singing, dancing, and spectacle, as well as on the technical aspects of production" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2007).

There are many different forms of traditional theatre that thespians use in order to create that sense of drama and spectacle. There is dramatic theatre, which can be defined as "[a form of] of theatre that [employs] exclusively or predominantly the spoken word" (Balme, 2008). Different types of genres that fall under dramatic theatre include "stand-up comedy and satirical revues, devised theatre and improvisational theatre" (Balme, 2008). Another form of theatre is dance theatre which encompasses "dance forms that are performed primarily in a theatrical context" like classical ballet (Balme, 2008). One of these is music-theatre, a unique form that "virtually [has] no written history and hardly

any definitions” (Salzman, 2002). It is a type a theatre form that is currently popular for using “elements of new tonal music, pop, nonoperatic voice technique and nonverbal and non-linear theatre” (Salzman, 2002). A recent example of this is *Rent*, an updated and contemporary version of Puccini’s opera, *La Boheme*. Music-theatre focuses on creating an artistic piece which is why it is rarely a cost-effective venture for potential sponsors: because of its heavy focus on sticking to its artistic mission, it is not thought as a “commercial enterprise that could turn a profit” (Salzman, 2002). Major foundations have started to lose interest in music-theatre, for example, the National Endowment for the Arts in the United states has now abolished its “opera-musical theatre programme” (Salzman, 2002). However, there are some music-theatre productions that do perform well commercially, such as *Rent*. Being set in the Lower East Side of New York City, *Rent* is described by Eric Salzman as being one of the most operatic music-theatre pieces in form and “least successful artistically” (2002). However, due to the creator, Jonathan Larsen’s, untimely death on the “eve of its off-off-Broadway opening”, there was an increase in publicity and it became incredibly popular (Salzman, 2002). *Rent* proved that there was a flaw in the system and that the only way music-theatre productions can be successful is to focus on what is relevant to the public and not the artistic process.

2.2 History of Theatre in Ghana

Ghana has a rich history of theatre that dates back to its traditional festivals and rituals. The majority of information that has been gathered on the subject pertains to southern Ghana, namely the Akan, the Ewe and the Fante (Gibbs, 2004). However, it is incorrect to presume that those in the rest of Ghana do not enjoy rich theatre cultures.

The development of Ghana's evolving theatre tradition stems from dances, rhetorical forms, symbols and symbolic acts (Gibbs, 2004). Across the country, "migrant groups cultivate their distinct identities by meeting to sing, tell stories and dance in the manner of their 'hometowns' (Gibbs, 2004). In *A History of Theatre in Africa*, James Gibbs discusses how theatre in Ghana evolved from narratives to *concert plays*. One set of narratives that has impacted Ghanaian theatre is those of Ananse the Spider and his trickster ways (Gibbs, 2004). Dramatists have brought these Akan-Fante tales to life through plays called *anansegro* (Gibbs, 2004). The plays are generally performed by a performing group that consists of a "chief of a group (*Anansesenhene*), chief of the women (*Kuwwura*), spokesperson (*Okyeame*), the narrator (*Anansesemwura* or *Mafo*), drummers (*Akyerema*) and mime artists (*Anansegoro mma*)" (Kerr, 1995). These plays have become an integral part of traditional narrative theatre in Ghana (Gibbs, 2004).

As Ghanaian theatre developed, it began to be influenced by the other cultures it came in contact with. The arrival of Europeans traders and Christian missionaries brought western dramatic influences. For example, after establishing their churches, the Christian missionaries would organise 'cantatas': morality plays that would teach the audience valuable lessons (Collins E. J., 2002). Cantatas, along with school plays, used elements of 'European theatre' like "scheduled performances, paying audiences and play scripts" (Gibbs, 2004). When Ghana was eventually colonised by the British, students put on plays on stages, which acted as a "physical barrier separating performers and the audience", during Empire Day (Gibbs, 2004). It was during these plays that the *concert*

party, a “slapstick musical comedy” that would have a “prominent moral tone”, was born (Barber, Collins, & Ricard, 1997). Master Yalley was one of the earliest actors to perform these concert parties when he started in 1918 at Sekondi Elementary School (Kerr, 1995). He was most likely influenced by Liberian and African-American sailors who would bring with them forms such as ragtime, the foxtrot and stand-up comedy (Collins E. J., 2002) and Hollywood silent films of the 1920s and 1930s (Kerr, 1995). Concert parties then evolved into “a professional organisation composed of a central core of founder member and an ever-changing periphery of “bandmen”” (Barber, Collins, & Ricard, 1997). They were generally made up of only males in which some would play female roles; however, actresses are now being included into these bands (Barber, Collins, & Ricard, 1997). The shows usually start with a “musical prelude, [followed by] a series of comic turns, the main ‘concert’ or moralising musical drama and a concluding music session” (Gibbs, 2004).

Ishmael Johnson, a.k.a. Bob Johnson, is probably one of the more notable concert party actors. He was a part of two notable bands, the Axim Trio and the Two Bobs and the Carolina Girl (Kerr, 1995). In those bands, he conducted notable tours throughout Ghana, as well as Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone during the 1930's. Different types of concert parties catered to different types of audiences. Master Yalley performed to “‘elite audiences’ (such as the Optimism Club Accra) of ‘lawyers and other professional men of social standing’ (Kerr, 1995) as well as “a small number of Europeans” (Collins E. J., 2002). However, because the plays were partly in Akan and the highlife music would also be pidgin English, Bob Johnson and his bands attracted audiences who were “less

educated than [their] high-class counterparts (Collins E. J., 2002). That being said “high-class concerts died out before the Second World War” (Collins E. J., 2002).

From the 1930s to the 1950s, the concert parties began to take on a political consciousness that impacted Ghana. Initially, Bob Johnson's groups accepted British colonialism by playing to an exclusively white European club (Kerr, 1995) and putting on shows like *The Coronation of King George the Sixth* (Collins E. J., 2002). However, as concert parties began to expand to other venues like church halls and villages, they started to oppose the British rulers and embody the “growth of popular nationalism and class-consciousness” (Kerr, 1995). For example, when Kwame Nkrumah, one of the many leaders of Ghana's independence movement, was imprisoned, the Axim Trio performed *Nkrumah is a Mighty Man* and *Nkrumah is Greater than Before* and donated the profits to Nkrumah's Congress People's Party (Kerr, 1995). However, when the public opinion of Nkrumah's government began to worsen in the mid-1960s, concert parties also incorporated that sentiment into their productions. Bob Cole, a popular concert party comedian at the time, “attacked the oppressive system of detentions and police surveillance with his dramatised song, 'Aban Kaban' ('The Government's in Chains')” (Kerr, 1995). Concert parties' ability to address the generation's problems among other social themes made concert parties wildly popular amongst Ghanaian audiences (Collins E. J., 2002). Recently, concert parties still live on, with “weekend matinee programmes” such as the Key Soap Concert Party being held at the National Theatre in Ghana capital, Accra (Collins E. J., 2002).

The establishment of secondary schools, such as Mfantispim in 1876 and Achimota in 1927, by European Christian missionaries also played “important roles in the broadening of theatrical experience” in Ghana (Gibbs, 2004). Mfantispim, for example, produced Kobina Sekyi, a playwright who wrote *The Blinkards*, an English-Fante speaking play that reprimands his countrymen and women for adopting the mannerisms of their British colonial masters (Gibbs, 2004). His work has gone on to inspire other 1930s writers like J.B Danquah, who wrote *The Third Woman* and F.K. Fiawoo who wrote *The Fifth Landing Stage* (Gibbs, 2004). One of the most dominating and influential figures in the history of Ghanaian theatre was Efua Sutherland. From the late 1950s to her death in 1996, Sutherland was heavily involved with the Ghanaian theatre scene by leading the Ghana National Theatre Movement with Kwame Nkrumah's blessing, being the “driving force behind the construction of the Drama Studio” that attracted other African playwrights like Wole Soyinka and writing several plays herself (Gibbs, 2004). After the *coup d'etat* that overthrew of Nkrumah's government in 1966, Ghana's theatre scene began to grow without the influence of government (Collins E. J., 2002).

During the development of the Drama and Theatre Studies Division at the University of Ghana, Scott Kennedy and Professor Kwabena Nketia realised that they needed to rally together with the music and dance divisions in the university in order to be successful (Kennedy, 1973). However, both of them so discovered that in a country like Ghana, “a country with great economic needs for its internal development”, securing the funds for things needed to keep the theatre movement going proved difficult (Kennedy, 1973). This was because foundations and philanthropic organisations were more willing to sponsor

agriculture and educational projects rather than theatre (Kennedy, 1973). The duo was able to find ways around some of their issues by finding “seed” money to pay for a company bus for performers and technicians to get to and from rehearsals (Kennedy, 1973). Kennedy also created a programme in the American Peace Corps where volunteer theatre specialists from the organisation train interested persons in the relevant aspects of theatre such as production and dance (Kennedy, 1973). Theatre creatives were able to find ways to keep the theatre movement going after the loss of government support.

The government's interest in theatre returned when J.J. Rawlings' took power for a second time in 1981. Playwrights like Asiedu Yirenkyi, Ama Ata Aidoo and Mohammed Ben-Abdallah held high office in the ministries of Information, Education and Culture (Gibbs, 2004). Rawlings also promoted festivals at various levels which led to the creation of Panafest and the construction of the National Theatre (Gibbs, 2004).

In the 21st century, there have been indications, like poor attendance at the National Theatre, that Ghanaian theatre is dying (Gibbs, 2004). Also, the example of the 'Key Soap' Concert Parties has shown “the disturbing extent to which Ghanaian theatre had become dependent on sponsorship of one sort or another” (Gibbs, 2004). Examples range from the productions of 'Amen Corner' and 'All My Sons' being sponsored by Americans or the French assisting in the adaptations of Molière (Gibbs, 2004). Even the British Arts Council, having 'shipped' the play *Yaa Asantewa* back to Ghana is proof that theatre productions rely on sponsorship now more than ever (Gibbs, 2004). That being said there is still hope for the Ghanaian theatre scene. There have been revivals of

classical Ghanaian texts and new productions are being written by up-and-coming writers like Yao Asare (Gibbs, 2004). Groups such as Ghana International Performing Arts Society have continued to undertake ambitious productions (Gibbs, 2004). Theatre is not only being taught at the University of Ghana's School of Performing Arts but in other notable universities as well such as the University of Education in Winneba (University of Education, Winneba).

2.3 Corporate Sponsorship

Sponsorship is one of the many tools theatre companies can use to succeed. One of the most available forms is corporate sponsorship, which has already been effectively used within other creatives sectors like music and television. According to "The Decision Process Involved in Corporate Sponsorship for the Arts", sponsorship is defined as "...an agreement in terms of which a sponsor provides some aid to a beneficiary, which may be an association, a team or an individual, to enable the latter to pursue some activity and thereby derives [sic] the benefits contemplated in terms of its promotion strategy" (Abratt et al (1987))" (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). It is also defined as "[...] the payment of money by a business to an arts organisation for the purpose of promoting the business' name, products or services, and [...] is part of a business's general promotional expenditure" (Hager & Winkler, 2012). Sponsorship can also take various forms depending on what type of event or organisation is being sponsored. For example, in sports sponsorship, promoting a team or an event can be through signs and logos as well as "the sponsor's presence on team souvenirs such as replica jerseys" (Glaser & Lum, 2004). In the case of theatre organisations in Ghana, sponsorship can come in the form of

advertising or assistance in securing venues for their productions, as these are generally expensive (Adu-Gyamfi, 2013).

One thing that sponsorship does not define is the “type of support, events and objects sought” by the parties involved (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). The authors of “The Decision Process Involved in Corporate Sponsorship for the Arts” try to understand what companies look for in art organisations when deciding when to sponsor them. Generally, it is a “small group of key executives [or professionals]” who have “sound knowledge and a keen interest in one or more areas of the arts” as well as a passion for the arts (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). Otherwise, it is treated as an investment decision that involves many variables that are grouped into three categories: “control regulations, environmental variables and situational variables” (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). Control regulations can range from local to government regulations while environmental variables have to do with macroeconomic features like economic activity. Situational variables are variables that deal with how much a company can get involved with sponsorship, for example, the company may look at its competitors’ involvement in sponsorship (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). In order to make decisions on arts sponsorship, companies have the option of using different models to build their criteria. The article uses the example of a model that has over 40 different criteria that are grouped into five categories: event-related, sponsored-organization related, sponsor-organization related, market-related and effect-related (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). When 79 American companies were surveyed on their involvement with every type of sponsorship, the highest-scoring objective they were looking at was “community relations” which was

then followed by “brand awareness” (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). Companies also emphasise looking at arts organisations and the events they produce. They analyse the event and how it relates to the company's promotional activities (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992).

2.4 Relationship between Companies and Theatre Organisations

The responsibility of sponsorship also falls on arts organisations as well as companies who are looking to sponsor. Theatre productions succumb to *Chorus Line Syndrome*, which is where musical works are supported with “the help of commercial backers in the hope of creating a hit that can transfer to Broadway and subsidise the theatre's true artistic mission” (Salzman, 2002). However, it is rare to see that happen as arts organisations need to consider not just their artistic mission or the “needs of the viewing audience, but also those of the funding bodies and facilitators (Thomas, Pervan, & Nuttall, 2009).

In the journal article, “Marketing Orientation and Arts Organisations: The Case for Business Sponsorship”, the authors try to understand how arts organisations are affected by private sponsorship. The relationship between arts organisations and potential sponsors is made up of “the motives that underpin the arrangement and anticipated gains on behalf of both parties” (Hager & Winkler, 2012). The article recommends that in order for art organisations to gain sponsorship, they have to “understand and satisfy the sponsors' commercial priorities” (Hager & Winkler, 2012). This can be done through practising marketing orientated behaviours so they compete with other potential

recipients (Hager & Winkler, 2012). Art organisations need to approach sponsorship with “greater management and marketing driven ethos” (Hager & Winkler, 2012). The authors tested the theory by using a case study involving four different theatre organisations in the West Midlands in the United Kingdom. Using face-to-face interviews, the authors wanted to understand the “importance of sponsorship for theatre” groups, motivation within the organisation to be market oriented, “impact of the desire to gain sponsorship” based on this motivation and the “nature of [the] sponsor’s needs” (Hager & Winkler, 2012). At the end of the study, it was found that “all four theatres demonstrated marketing oriented behaviours across their business sponsorship activities as anticipated (Hager & Winkler, 2012). However, the “formality, extent and manager of these activities varied” across the organisations (Hager & Winkler, 2012). Despite that, marketing orientation was key for all theatre organisations to “securing and sustaining business sponsorship” (Hager & Winkler, 2012). Ghanaian theatre companies could probably implement this in their organisation as this has probably aided in the fact that private investment in the arts increased in the West Midlands than in any other region in the UK (Hager & Winkler, 2012). Theatre organisations realised that in business sponsorship, the sponsor is the “customer” in the relationship (Hager & Winkler, 2012). On the other hand, theatre organisations are also committed to ensuring that the viewing audience enjoys the event they put on. Also, there are concerns that the market orientation strategy may be counter-productive to arts organisations as it would threaten artistic integrity and not allow them to compromise with its sponsors (Hager & Winkler, 2012).

Sponsorship is one marketing tool that is gaining popularity amongst companies in different countries. Between 1981 and 1985 sponsorship in Great Britain grew by 140% (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992) and in the US, sponsorship has tripled in the last five years with similar results with companies in France, Canada and Japan (Turgeon & Colbert, 1992). Because of the increase in sponsorship, theatre organisations will be looking to companies in order to receive the backing needed to produce their productions. The Ghanaian theatre industry's future looks promising as it appears as the country progresses, corporate sponsorship increases, especially in the art industries.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The research for this paper is to identify the process by which sponsorship for theatre organisations is attained from both theatre organisations and corporate sponsors. The paper gathers this research through the use of qualitative methods, in order to compare and contrast how different theatre organisations attain sponsorship and run their programmes. The data will be gathered through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with those managing the day-to-day operations of theatre organisations and companies that sponsor theatre productions. A similar method was used by Sarah Thomas, Simon Pervan and Peter Nuttall when gathering information on four theatre companies and how sponsorship is attained by theatre organisations (2009). Semi-structured interviews allow asking of certain questions to everyone, furthermore, it gives the opportunity to pose additional questions if more probing is needed.

The sample size is limited to theatre organisations and businesses that are currently operating in Ghana. This is because this paper solely focuses on the theatre industry within the country. Theatre organisations that were chosen for the study include Roverman Productions, Bambu Centre (Heritage Series) and University of Ghana's Abibigromma Theatre Company. SWOT analysis was done on the theatre organisations to further analyse their similarities and differences.

Tables 1-3

SWOT analyses of chosen theatre organisations

Roverman Productions

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercially successful/able to attract many corporate sponsors • Productions appeal to a wide audience • Home at the National Theatre • Productions come with a positive message that the audience can relate with 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience-driven, resulting in a lack of variety of content • The way the gauge whether or not a company they are looking to sponsor has a good reputation is very subjective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people might have differing opinions on whether that company has a good reputation
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can explore doing other forms of theatre (tragedy etc.) • Productions appeal to a wide audience 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition from other theatre organisations like the Heritage Series • Keeping the various sponsors happy and meeting their objectives

Abibigromma Theatre Company

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally enriching • Receives budget and performers from the University of Ghana, Legon • Brings the cultural practices of Ghana to the stage 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties attaining sponsorship from outside the university <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not as aggressive in their sponsorship hunting • Unaware of which companies are interested in sponsoring theatre organisations
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can put on their main productions when nothing is happening at the National Theatre to gain a wider audience • Can appeal to companies that are interested in sponsoring them and their productions (ie. MTN) 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition from other theatre organisations like the Heritage Series • Not being able to garner enough corporate sponsorship to put on the productions they want

The Heritage Series

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercially successful • Productions appeal to a wide audience (Especially “the young and rising”) • Accessible: staged at different venues • Tells the history of Ghana in an entertaining way 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not exactly dramatic theatre: more like a narrative to song and dance • A tendency to rush the steps in building a production (ie. Started rehearsing before the script was complete) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can lead to an incomplete production
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can explore doing a traditional piece of dramatic theatre (ie, musical theatre) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branch out beyond telling the history of Ghana or tell the story as a musical (see <u>Hamilton</u>) • Can take this concept of telling the histories of other countries to other countries 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition from other theatre organisations like Roverman Productions • Need to gain other sponsors in case the one with Unilever (Key Soap) falls through

These organisations had various differences between them in terms of commercial success, ability to attain sponsorship and organisational goals. For example, Roverman was created for entertaining audiences and monetary gain whereas Bambu Centre's Heritage Theatre Series or Wogb3 J3k3 and Abibigromma Theatre Company were created to educate people. Either on the history and culture of Ghana (Bambu Centre, 2016) or to aid in educating others on different ideas and to experiment with different art forms (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016). Because their missions vary, the type of companies and sponsorship they would want to attract would also be different.

Along with interviewing theatre organisations, this paper aims to understand sponsorship from the businesses' point of view. Interviewing companies that have already sponsored productions, such as Nestlé, MTN and Alliance Française d'Accra, will help gain a better understanding as to what the decision-making processes are that lead to a company sponsoring a theatre production. Telecommunication companies in Ghana have been known to be huge patrons of the Ghanaian arts, often battling each other to secure sponsorship for notable events. One example of this is when MTN defeated Vodafone in order to be the main sponsor of the Ghana Music Awards (Peace FM, 2011). Alliance Française however, is a major player in the Ghanaian arts industry, hosting five major festivals per year (Alliance Française, 2016). While conducting interviews, I hope to understand why there is such an interest in sponsoring the arts and whether or not it could extend into sponsoring theatre productions.

The interviews are recorded using an iPhone 6 with additional notes taken either on paper or using Microsoft OneNote. Microsoft OneNote will generally be used to analyse the data, however if any quantitative data appears during any of the interviews, Microsoft Excel may be used. Findings and recommendations are based on those interviews and the notes. Lack of information is the major limitation to this study. Companies may not want to be forthright with the exact cost of their marketing activities. Also, because this is a budding industry, there may not be enough available information to draw a holistic conclusion.

3.1 Questions for Interviews

The questions that are to be asked in the interview consist of the following:

For corporate sponsors:

- How much do you spend on theatre sponsorship?
- What are the criteria when looking for organisations to sponsor?
- Who on your team finds organisations to sponsor?
- What type of sponsorship do you generally give out?

For theatre organisations:

- What type of theatre do you organise?
- Who is your target audience?
- Which sponsors have you approached?
- How do you attract sponsors to your organisation?
- How responsive have they been?
- What type of sponsorship are you able to receive?

All these interviews are voice recorded for future reference and the participants are made aware ahead of time that they will be recorded. The data will be analysed through the notes taken during the interview and once after the recording has been played back.

Chapter 4 – Findings

As mentioned in the methodology, the findings were based on semi-structured interviews with both theatre organisations and the companies in Ghana. However, different people within the theatre industry were also interviewed in order to gain a broader perspective on the industry.

4.1 The Companies and Organisations Interviewed

The theatre organisations that were interviewed are:

- **Roverman Productions:** a live theatre company that is also involved in publishing and producing different types of media. Based out of Osu, Roverman generally produces pieces that bring the “total theatre experience”, with plays that consist of music and dance (Roverman Productions, 2016). The plays tend to be comedic in nature, often to meet their target market of families and expatriates wanting to experience Ghanaian culture. That being said, Roverman’s plays often have a moral to their stories, ensuring that the audience leaves learning something new. (Roverman Productions, 2016)
- **Abibigromma Theatre Company:** the resident theatre company at the University of Ghana that employs students from the School of Performing Arts (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016). Abibigromma’s aim is to create a space for people to experiment and to bring African culture to the stage (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016). It is generally used by professional students trained by the university. The company generally produces plays but they are also asked to open conferences and seminars (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016). Their

plays target different types of audiences but they generally try to target those who would go to the National Theatre. They also conduct educational roadshows that train certain demographics important values to keep them successful. Because they are under the university, they receive a yearly budget from the university. It is often small and limits them in what they can do (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016).

- **Bambu Centre (Heritage Theatre Series):** The Heritage Theatre Series or Wogb3 J3k3 sets out to tell the history of Ghana through theatre, music and dance (Bambu Centre, 2016). It is a three-part series with the final production leading up to Ghana 60th anniversary of independence (Bambu Center, 2016). The first production did musical theatre while the second production will be more dramatic in nature (Bambu Centre, 2016). The purpose of the Heritage Theatre Series is to bring “a new perspective to Africa” and to motivate Africans to appreciate their continent (Bambu Centre, 2016). These productions are gauged to an audience that wants to learn more about Africa and its creator, Abdul Moomen Muslim has plans to take the series abroad (Bambu Centre, 2016).

The companies interviewed were:

- **MTN:** A multinational telecommunications company that is based in Johannesburg, South Africa and made its mark in many countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East (MTN, 2014). Being the market leader in Africa and the Middle East, they entered the Ghanaian market in 2006 after acquiring Investcom (MTN, 2014) and soon rose to be the largest telecommunications company in the country (MTN, 2016). Its goal this year is to lead the delivery of a bold new digital world to its customers (MTN, 2016).

They are generally interested in sponsoring events that are trending in sports, lifestyle, entertainment and music (MTN, 2016).

- **Nestlé:** A consumer goods company that began operating in Ghana in 1957 (Nestle, n.d.). From Milo to Cerelac, Nestlé sells a variety of food and nutritional goods across Central and West Africa, using Accra as their headquarters (Nestle, n.d.). With competitors such as Unilever, they are looking to be the leader in that industry. One of their main beliefs is to create share value and this is done through the marketing objectives (Nestlé, 2016). Some of their objectives are rural development and environmental sustainability, especially at their plants like the one in Tema (Nestlé, 2016).
- **Alliance Française:** a non-profit organisation helps enrich the culture of whatever country they are within. Alliance Française is also a language school as well as a cultural venue as they provide a platform for local artists of different art forms to show their work to the public. They sponsor artists in a variety of ways through holding several festivals throughout the year and hosting concerts and art expeditions. (Alliance Française, 2016)

4.2 Theatre Sponsorship in Ghana

When discussing sponsorship, theatre organisations recognised this as a business partnership in which both parties should benefit from the partnership. At Roverman, when approaching each company, they ask “what do we have to offer them?” as well as “what can they offer us?”. This can be difficult for many creatives as they have difficulty interacting with companies in order to make those business transactions. While it is important to ensure that

product (ie. The production) is of top quality, creatives need to find a way to convince businesses that they will walk away from the relationship having gained something for their brand (ie. new consumers) (Osei-Tutu, 2016). Theatre organisations differ on what they are looking for in a potential corporate sponsor. Roverman looks for companies with good reputations whose products “provide quality value” and “enhances the quality of life of its customers” (Roverman Productions, 2016). In order to attain this sponsorship, it is beneficial for one to foster relationships within the company in which one is looking for sponsorship from. For example, in order to stage some of his productions, Chief Moomen fostered a five-year relationship with people at various stages of management at Unilever's Key Soap brand (Bambu Centre, 2016).

4.3 Alternative Forms of Sponsorship

Sponsorship generally did not necessarily come in the form of money. Companies would often use this opportunity to showcase their products when it came to sponsorship. When Fan Milk was sponsoring their performances, Roverman was provided with their ice-cream products to distribute for free to the audience (Roverman Productions, 2016). Abibigromma was also given products when the organisation was sponsored by Voltic and Blue Skies (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016). Companies tend to take advantage of their sponsorship by giving out products to members of the audience as a form of advertising. Alliance Française generally gives out their amphitheatre space to performers as a form of sponsorship (Alliance Française, 2016). Media houses, like Joy FM, were also willing to sponsor theatre organisations through giving them air time to advertise their productions (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016). DDP, a company that sells outdoor

advertising space, gave Roverman a certain number of billboards to promote their productions (Roverman Productions, 2016). Another form of sponsorship is also through discounts. Best Western Hotel gave Roverman a discount on the hall they used to stage one of their productions (Roverman Productions, 2016). In return for their sponsorship, theatre organisations promise to mention the company at certain times during the production among other things.

Roverman, for example, has been sponsored by numerous corporations spanning different industries. From banks (Stanbic Bank, Fidelity Bank) to consumer good companies (Unilever, Nestle) to even real estate companies (Blue Rose), they have had successful partnership with many companies (Roverman Productions, 2016). One of their most notable ones is Airtel, their current main sponsor, which took over from MTN who faced “budget constraints” at the time and needed to cut down on their marketing activities (Roverman Productions, 2016). Airtel came on-board as they had an interest in sponsoring live-theatre events and appreciated the value Roverman brought to the industry (Roverman Productions, 2016). Abibigromma once had sponsorship from Nestlé during one of their tours. (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016) In exchange for accommodation and meals, Abibigromma handed out Nestlé products at their productions (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016). A similar scenario occurred at the latest *Wogb3 J3k3* instalment where members of the audience were treated to free samples of Key Soap that were provided by the sponsor.

4.4 Corporate Sponsors Objectives

Companies generally have objectives they want to meet when they go into sponsoring an event. For example, at MTN, they have a measurement and evaluation (M&E) form (MTN, 2016). The form measures the objectives that the company sets before the event versus what actually occurred at the event (MTN, 2016). Nestlé also uses reviews and impact reports to prove whether or not the event they sponsored was a success and if it is worth sponsoring the event (Nestlé, 2016). Both organisations agree that some of the benefits of the event may not be realised immediately after the event. As such, events are generally measured qualitatively and as well as quantitatively (MTN, 2016). Immediately after an event, the company and the theatre organisation can measure how many people attended the event or how many of the company's products were distributed (MTN, 2016). However, gauging how many people connected with the company and would like to use their products again would be difficult to define and will have to be measured over the long term (Nestlé, 2016). At MTN, an internal research team might work with an external research company to gauge the impact of the event they sponsored (MTN, 2016).

Alliance Française, for example, point out that although they have an outdoor amphitheatre, it is still not completely conducive for a theatre production (Alliance Française, 2016). They also believe that the different types of theatre in Ghana are limited and similar to each other in terms of theme (Alliance Française, 2016). Alliance Française is looking for theatre productions that expand cultural diversity and thematic diversity (Alliance Française, 2016).

For MTN, theatre currently is not a trend in Ghana, despite it fitting with their ideals of sponsoring "sports, lifestyle, entertainment and music" (MTN, 2016). Theatre also does not fit

in with Nestlé's current strategy with its focus on brand nutrition (Nestlé, 2016). That being said, all companies mentioned are interested in sponsoring theatre productions, so long as they fit within their objectives.

4.5 The Future of the Concert Party

Another issue that theatre companies face is creating certain types of productions that audiences will go to. An example of this is the concert party. According to Professor John Collins, a part-time lecturer in the Department of Music at the University of Ghana, the concert party during the 1970s was a very professional outfit that operated for ten months in a year (Collins J. , 2016). They catered to audiences by providing them exactly what wanted or else, the audience would riot (Collins J. , 2016). However today, the concert party has fallen out of popular favour (Collins J. , 2016).

This may be on account of shifting tastes and perceptions of those involved in concert parties. Even though concert parties are performed by professional, they are often considered lowly (Collins J. , 2016). Collins also theorises that the coup that toppled the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, in 1966 (The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016) may have stopped concert parties from being institutionalised on an academic level (Collins J. , 2016).

Concert parties are also difficult to commercialize. They require a lot of audience participation, asking the audience to imagine the set based on what the actors were performing (Collins J. , 2016). This is very different from standard theatre productions that use backdrops and special effects. And it seems the lack of these elements did not translate well into

modern times. In addition, during Nkrumah's time in office, the concert party was being used for nationalistic reasons (Collins J. , 2016). In today's more capitalist era, concert parties are no longer relevant to Ghanaians (Collins J. , 2016).

They are nevertheless being revived by the National Theatre and Unilever through the Key Soap Concert Parties (Collins J. , 2016). However, because the National Theatre tried to modernize the format, it failed to the point where the audience revolted (Collins J. , 2016). Despite its move to television, many Ghanaians lost interest in the concert party (Collins J. , 2016).

4.6 Comparison to the South African Theatre Industry

When discussing the topic at hand with one of the respondents, Mpho Osei-Tutu, a comparison came up between South Africa and Ghana. According to the respondent, South Africa, like Ghana, is having difficulties finding funding within its theatre industry with the biggest problem is that theatre is very expensive to produce and that many people within South Africa cannot afford to attend these plays (Osei-Tutu, 2016). Also, sponsorship for the arts comes in non-monetary forms (Osei-Tutu, 2016).

Osei-Tutu claims the government has demonstrated an interest in the theatre arts by providing funding to theatres such as the Market Theatre (2016); a state-run theatre showcases original South African work considering themes such as race (Osei-Tutu, 2016). That being said, the government budget towards the arts is small enough to not be taken seriously by players both inside and outside the industry (Osei-Tutu, 2016).

While ensuring that the objectives and goals of both the artist and sponsor are met in the production, theatre organisations and sponsors often have different perspectives on what an event should look like. Theatre organisations can bend so completely to the ideals of corporate sponsors that they lose their artistic integrity in the process. This once happened in the case of *The Stadium*, a play that illustrated the life of young adults in a township. The play was heavily sponsored by South African Breweries (SAB) and their advertising dominated the duration of the play (Osei-Tutu, 2016). Mpho Osei-Tutu, a South African actor, writer and producer, recommends that those finding sponsorship for their theatre pieces need to be able to stand by their work (2016). It is something that theatre companies in Ghana have already taken notice of. Abibigromma has already recognised that need to be more strategic in the way they sell themselves in a way that allows them to perform the work they would like to do (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016).

Overall, improvements are being made in South Africa. Producers are not only looking to the private sector for their sponsorship but also looking to other theatre organisations for guidance as well. The Creative Stock Exchange is one example where other individuals in the industry can network with each other in order to create relationships that may be beneficial for future production (Osei-Tutu, 2016).

4.7 Limitations of Study

Unfortunately, being able to get in contact companies for this paper was very difficult for the purposes of my study. Initially, preliminary research was conducted in order to ascertain

which theatre organisations were best for this study. However, as the study went on, theatre organisations were chosen based on opportunistic sampling. Also, some of the individuals I would have liked to interview were either not in the country or were simply unavailable. It was difficult to schedule time with the relevant people at certain corporations which could lead to this study being incomplete.

Getting exact figures from corporations were difficult as well. Most corporations were not willing to release their exact figures for their companies for various reasons. Having exact figures or being able to ascertain what percentage of the corporations' budget were being used for sponsorship would have been helpful to theatre organisations and how they can position themselves to meet potential sponsors. Being able to compare companies' monetary contributions to theatre sponsorship was therefore not possible for this study.

Personally, I am very interested in theatre and entire industry that comes with it. However, due to the degree I am pursuing, the focus of the paper need to be on the business aspect of the industry. Therefore, the number of theatre organisations was limited in this study in order to keep the paper's main focus on the business (rather than the art) of theatre sponsorship and to fulfil the BSc Business Administration requirements of the University.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and Recommendation

According to this study, one thing that is for certain is the fact that Ghana does have a rich theatre arts history that is ready to be tapped into. The likes of Roverman Productions, Abibigromma and the Heritage Theatre Series prove that Ghanaians are still interested in theatre and are willing to pay money to see a thrilling performance. However, one thing that theatre organisations can do to survive and thrive is to foster strong business relationships with compatible companies. There are companies out there are willing to form those partnerships so long as they meet their requirements and objectives.

It is recommended to theatre companies to start developing an acumen for “talking business” with potential sponsors. One of the major complaints that occurred during the course of the study was that theatre producers had difficulties approaching businesses because they don't understand how to converse with managers, *et al* (Osei-Tutu, 2016). Theatre companies need to learn how to be strategic in convincing businesses why they should sponsor their productions (Abibigromma Resident Theatre Company, 2016). Both parties should remember that the nature of their relationship is purely business, and nothing else (Roverman Productions, 2016).

Theatre organisations can also look towards each other to find the support they need to put on their shows. For example, on the weekend of 1st April, Roverman, the Heritage Series and Abibigromma all had productions on in various venues in Accra. While it is excellent that different theatre productions are being held, giving residents of Accra the kind of choice that exists in other major global cities, it forced consumers to choose between which theatre

productions to attend. This could have been avoided if these and other theatre organisations came together, organised themselves, and supported each other in their endeavours as is done in South Africa through a forum called the Creative Stock Exchange (Osei-Tutu, 2016): a place where theatre organisations create deals amongst each other in order to put on their productions (Osei-Tutu, 2016). It is this kind of organisation and negotiation that could prove useful to theatre companies in Ghana. It is important that organisations take ownership of their industry by organising it in a way that everyone interested in the industry can get involved.

Theatre productions should also take special care of their audience when putting together a production. Different groups of people care for different types of audiences. For example, in South Africa, audiences like to see performances where their race is represented (ie. black actors for black audiences) (Osei-Tutu, 2016). Due to the diverse nature of the cast, the Broadway musical *Hamilton* would most likely succeed in South Africa and companies may be willing to capitalise on it (Osei-Tutu, 2016). Audiences are very important because companies want to ensure that their target market is often in the audience. That is currently why MTN is not sponsoring any theatre productions because they are not one of the major trends that fit within their criteria (MTN, 2016). Theatre companies in Ghana need to analyse what type of audiences productions will bring and try to target companies that will most likely benefit from communicating to those audiences. For example, if a theatre company wants to revive concert parties, they may want to do it for educational purposes (Collins J. , 2016) and focus on attracting companies that would want to promote themselves to school-aged consumers.

The theatre industry in Ghana has the capability to grow. Through the combined effort of both theatre organisations and companies, this country can have a theatre industry that residents can be proud of. However, everyone involved will have to fight against the stigma that the arts are not important enough to invest in. Only then can the Ghanaian theatre industry truly succeed.

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